

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 04458 202153Z
ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAB-01 L-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-14
INR-05 /031 W

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P 202130Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2450

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 4458

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: CANAL NEGOTIATIONS: ESCOBAR'S DINNER REMARKS

1. ACCORDING TO A MEMBER OF THE PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATING TEAM, CHIEF NEGOTIATOR ROMULO ESCOBAR DELIVERED HIMSELF OF SOME HIGHLY UNDIPLOMATIC COMMENTS ON THE CANAL NEGOTIATIONS AT A WASHINGTON DINNER FOR THE WHOLE PANAMANIAN TEAM LAST WEDNESDAY (JUNE 15). REPORTEDLY ESCOBAR DENOUNCED THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS IN STRONG TERMS AND DECLARED THAT THE "GRINGOS" ONLY UNDERSTAND VIOLENCE. PANAMA, HE ALLEGEDLY SAID, REALLY NEEDS "500 DEAD", ONLY THEREAFTER CAN IT BEGIN TO NEGOTIATE EFFECTIVELY WITH THE U.S. HIS REMARKS WERE, AS WELL, REplete WITH UNFLATTERING PERSONAL REFERENCES TO U.S. NEGOTIATORS. ESCOBAR WAS "AS YOU MIGHT SUSPECT, DRUNK" WHEN HE LAUNCHED INTO HIS "TIRADE", THE PANAMANIAN SOURCE ADDED.

2. EMBASSY OFFICER SPOKE WITH THIS SOURCE ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON. SOURCE'S COLLEAGUE CONFIRMED DINNER AND TONE OF ESCOBAR'S COMMENTS IN ANOTHER CONVERSATION YESTERDAY. SECOND SOURCE WAS IRRITATED AT HIS SUPERIOR'S
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"BOORISHNESS", BUT IMPLIED "WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT".

3. COMMENT: EMBASSY IS REMINDED OF THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN ESCOBAR AND MIKE KOZAK ON CONTADORA OF SOME MONTHS AGO. WHILE "CATASTROPHE" PREDICTED IN THAT CONVERSATION HAS NOT COME TO PASS, REPETITION OF SIMILAR SENTIMENTS REFLECTS AT LEAST ON ESCOBAR'S

PENCHANT FOR SANGUINARY APOCALYPTIC FANTASIES.
GONZALEZ

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Message Attributes

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